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13 March 1985

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Acting Deputy Chief, Economic Resources Division

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Thanks for your thoughtful memorandum to the Director on Agency personnel processes. I circulated it anonymously to two or three other experienced people to gather their impressions. Frankly, if we understand your suggestions fully, we disagree with your approach.

To sum it all up, the switch a few years ago towards a uniform promotion system in which employees at each grade level are considered at specific intervals by panels was (and is) considered by all of us to be highly desirable. Our widespread sense of the employees' perception of the essential fairness of the revised system outweighed, in our view, any relatively small reduction in the authority of individual managers to control promotions more directly.

Beyond this, I find myself in substantial agreement with much of what you suggest in your memo, while disagreeing on the premise. For example, you talk about the importance of early feedback to new analysts on their performance relative to that of their peers, and note that a monthly promotion option provides for the feedback. I agree, but point out that the feedback could--and should--take place regardless. Moreover, I believe that as a supervisor, you still do hold most of the cards. It is unlikely that a panel will promote one of your employees if you don't recommend him or her, and the panel is unlikely to deny you promotion of one of your people if you make a strong enough case.

We do appreciate your taking the time to give us your thoughts, but your proposal, if we understand it correctly, doesn't convince us that it would result in a net improvement.

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Executive Director

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Directorate of Intelligence  
Office of Imagery Analysis

OIA/ERD-30/85  
14 February 1985

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence

FROM:

Acting Deputy Chief, Economic Resources Division

SUBJECT: Uniform Promotion System -- Adverse Impact on Young Professionals

REFERENCE: DCI Guidance For Pursuing Excellence -- "Continually Strive for Equity in Performance Evaluation Systems and Communicate it to the Employees"

1. I believe that the combination of the twice-a-year Agency wide uniform promotion system and Directorate time in-grade requirements has had an adverse effect on the management, professional growth, and morale of analysts at the GS-07 to GS-11 level. The system hinders management prerogative to motivate, recognize, and reward varying levels of performance by promotion because it does not permit career panels to use staggered promotion times to differentiate between officers ranked in Categories I, II, and III in the Comparative Evaluation Ranking (CER) system. For these reasons I suggest we return to our previous policy of allowing promotions to be awarded in a month deemed appropriate based on performance evaluation and comparative ranking rather than only in two fixed months a year.

2. The early feedback to new analysts on their performance relative to that of their peers is a key element in beginning any career. The latitude provided by a monthly promotion option provides for that feedback. For example, officers with a CER of I could be promoted from GS-07 to GS-08 in nine months, those with a CER of II in 11 months, and those with a CER of III on the order of 17 months. More flexibility in the promotions schedule also allows for recognition of performance within CER categories. If one of two analysts in a component is slightly stronger than the other, the promotions could be separated by a month or two. The peer group would notice this quickly and the point made without undo financial hardship. Current procedures force us to lump analysts of distinctly varying strengths together when considering promotions, thereby fogging the recognition and motivation value of the promotion. Worse yet, this CER lumping results in inaccurate feedback to the officer which can cause unrealistic expectations, and or over reaction to performance difficulties.

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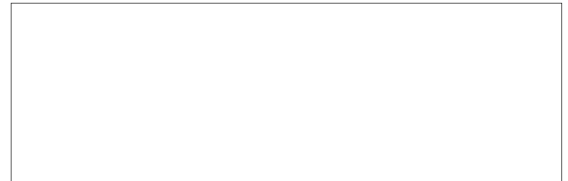
SUBJECT: Uniform Promotion System -- Adverse Impact on Young Professionals

3. The Directorate of Intelligence has attempted to deal with this problem by allowing out-of-cycle promotion of Category I analysts. This partial solution, however, still forces a lumping of the Category II and Category III groups, probably causes upward CER creep, and changes the CER from a management tool to a promotion list. We are hiring sharp, highly competitive people. They know who is in their peer group, and have their own perception of who is 1st, 2nd, or 3rd best. It doesn't take them long to recognize this fact and question why promotions do not reflect performance. Or worse, they may develop poor attitudes or work habits. The economic impact at these grades draws attention to and antagonizes the problem. This is not a one time problem--it impacts on the first four promotions of many analysts' professional life in this Agency and sets the tone for their entire career.

4. I fully appreciate the need for a uniform promotion system at the higher grades, but I am convinced that it should be modified at the junior levels. As a supervisor I believe that I have had one of my most potent management tools taken away from me. The promotion procedure as it presently exists for junior analysts is counter-productive.

5. One last point. I have discussed this subject with numerous Branch and Division chiefs in both the DS&T and the DI and I feel confident that the vast majority of them would support the view outlined in this memorandum.

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